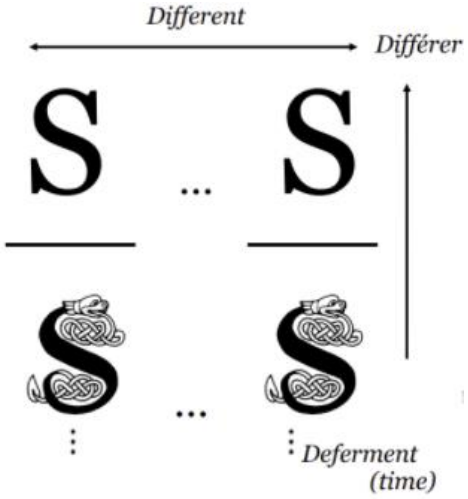
"*They are Eating Dogs*"

Rivalry is Orthogonality: Two Paths, One Space

Iraj E. Ghoochani

> *...in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-a-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore one might proceed too quickly to a neutralization that in practice would leave the previous field untouched, leaving one no hold on the previous opposition, thereby preventing any means of intervening in the field effectively. We know what always have been the practical (particularly political) effects of immediately jumping beyond oppositions, and of protests in the simple form of neither this nor that.*
>
> *—Derrida, Jacques (1992). Positions. p. 41.*[1]

This Derrida quote can indeed guide us into an understanding of orthogonality as a more precise structure than binary oppositions. The concept of *différance*, with its play of deferral and difference, reflects an internal movement that never quite resolves into the oppositional stasis. Rather than constructing opposition, it opens a space for relations that are complex, and in their complexity, hint at orthogonal dynamics. But Derrida, despite coming close to this kind of thinking, stops short of articulating a fully vectoral, orthogonal space as a way to understand relational dynamics.

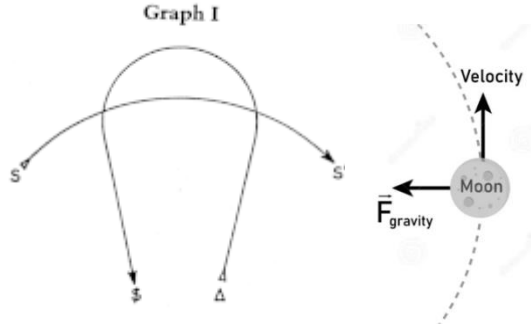


The derridean system of sign: Différer (*différance*) is a sign under erasure and a general property of every word. Every word in a new lexicon has a trace of the older lexicons in form of an archaic entry. We are surrounded with lexicons from every direction and there is nothing other than this ocean of signifiers. "*l n'y a rien en dehors du texte* (*there is no outside-text*)"

[1] Derrida, Jacques: Positions, translated and annotated by Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, 1981 (1972)

(Derrida, Limited Inc, 1972: 148)[2] (the ornamented S is taken from the following online dream dictionary to signify the archaic trace of the letter S.

Ethnotopology, a concept we could posit as the next stage beyond structuralism, does exactly that: it recognizes that cultural and human structures, as vectors in a multidimensional space, are not merely oppositional forces (as Levi-Strauss might have suggested at first with his binary structures) but rather exist in orthogonal relationships like the two axis inside every dictionary depicted above. They act upon each other without intersecting or fully negating one another. These relations operate much like the graph of desire as theorized by Lacan, where drives and desires circulate not through simple binaries (self/other, subject/object) but through overlapping flow of tensions that move the subject.



Left: The most basic section of the Graph of Desire, as published in Lacan's essay "*The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious.*" Right: Perpendicular forces acting on moon holding it onto its orbit. The Earth's curvature and the moon's velocity are not oppositional forces; they are orthogonal, operating in a kind of silent rivalry.

This orthogonal interaction can be compared to the force vectors acting between the moon and Earth. The Earth's curvature and the moon's velocity are not oppositional forces; they are orthogonal, operating in a kind of silent rivalry. The Earth's gravity continuously pulls at the moon, but the moon's trajectory, angled just so, allows it to escape full collapse. The curvature of the Earth is too vast to close in, and the moon's velocity too perfect to fly away. This harmonious yet tense relationship, where two forces act upon each other without collapsing into each other, is the essence of orthogonal rivalry. It is not antagonism but a form of coexistence that exceeds binary opposition. This offers us a key, a model for understanding culture. In this vector space of ethnotopology, we can conceive of cultural dynamics, social relations, and desires not as binary oppositions but as orthogonal vectors in a multidimensional field. Here, rivalry does not signify destruction or negation but the creation of a silent, dynamic tension where different vectors act upon each other without the need for intersection or collapse, as we see in our political rivalries, artistic creations, and even the gravitational fields of celestial bodies.

Ethnotopology

Ethnotopology, as a form of post-structuralism, is a model for cultural structures that seeks to move beyond the limits of binary oppositions (in the way that we read Lévi-Strauss) and hierarchical dualisms (Derrida). Instead of perceiving relations in terms of opposition—where one force negates, mirrors, or subsumes the other—ethnotopology embraces orthogonality, a concept where forces or entities interact and influence one another while maintaining their distinct trajectories. This interpretation introduces a

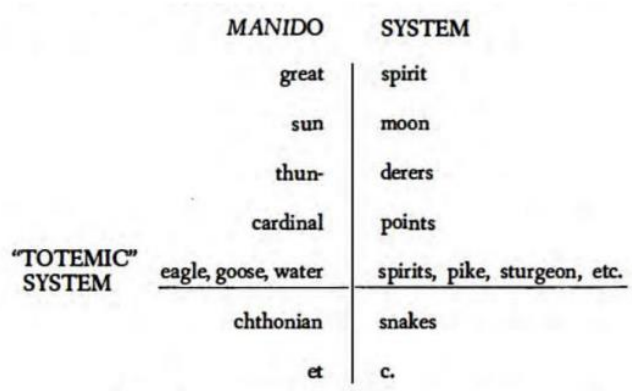
[2] Derrida, Jacques: Limited Inc, Northwestern University Press, 1972.

form of rivalry that operates not in direct conflict, but in co-ex-istence—each entity stands mutually out of the other functioning in its own domain without the need for resolution. This is shaped by the topological curvature of the space, in which each remains invisible to the other, moving along its own trajectory, compelled by the curvature formed through the ex-istence of the other.

Ethnotopology is not necessarily a critique of Lévi-Strauss's work, but rather a reinterpretation that offers an expanded framework for understanding cultural structures. While Lévi-Strauss's structuralism is often associated with binary oppositions—such as nature vs. culture, raw vs. cooked—this focus might reflect more the interpretive lens through which his work has often been read, rather than the full complexity of his own contributions. In fact, Lévi-Strauss himself provides numerous examples of systems that move beyond simple dualistic thinking. One such case is the distinction between the system of totemism and the system of "spirits" or *manido*. In Totemism (1991 [1962]), he describes the totemic system as one governed by a principle of equivalence, where natural species are metaphorically aligned with social categories. However, the *manido* system operates differently: it is ordered in a hierarchized pantheon, showing a more complex, orthogonal relationship between entities rather than a direct opposition. He states:

> *Entirely distinct from the system of totemic names, which is governed by a principle of equivalence, there is that of the 'spirits' or manido, which are ordered in a hierarchized pantheon.* (Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, 1991 [1962]: 22).[3]

Here, Lévi-Strauss acknowledges a form of interaction that is not reducible to binary structures. This system does not merely oppose one category to another but creates relationships that are more complex and multidimensional, much like the orthogonal interactions proposed by ethnotopology.

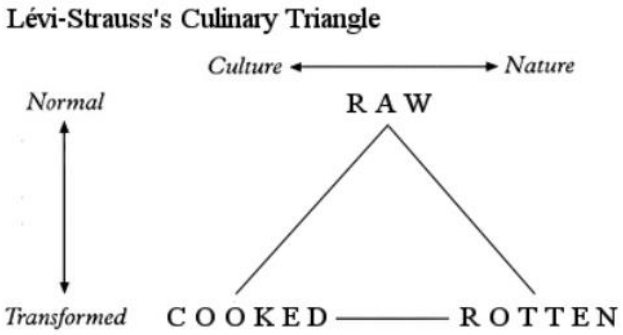


Totemic vs. Manido System (Lévi-Strauss, Totemism, 1991 (1962): 23)

Furthermore, Lévi-Strauss's famous assertion that "*natural species are chosen not because they are 'good to eat' but because they are 'good to think'*" (Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, 1991 [1962]: 89) reveals that his methodology often dealt with symbolic networks and metaphoric systems rather than strict oppositions. Even in the culinary triangle, which is often taken as a binary structural model, Lévi-Strauss's use of elements like honey and tobacco shows a kind of orthogonal thinking—systems where

[3] Lévi-Strauss, Claude: Totemism, translated by Rodney Needham, London: Merlin Press, 1991 (1962).

the relations between elements are not reducible to a simple contrast between opposing poles.



In *From Honey to Ashes*[4], Lévi-Strauss expands his examination of cultural systems from the binary opposition of raw and cooked, which he explored in *The Raw and the Cooked*[5], to a more nuanced and multidimensional analysis. The raw-cooked opposition in Lévi-Strauss's earlier work symbolizes the transition from nature to culture: Raw food, untouched by fire, exists in a natural state, whereas cooked food signifies the intervention of culture. This binary fits into his larger project of structural anthropology, which sought to reveal the deep, universal patterns underlying human cultures.

In *From Honey to Ashes*, the opposition between honey and tobacco is less about nature versus culture and more about a different kind of transformation. Here, the role of tobacco and honey can be understood as orthogonal to the raw-cooked axis. Tobacco, consumed as smoke, is unique: it does not simply undergo a transformation in the fire; it *becomes* the fire, existing as pure consumption, as the evanescent smoke itself. It is not food that is smoked; it is a substance that becomes *only* smoke—a disembodied state, ghostlike in its presence.

On the other hand, honey is not raw in the traditional sense, for it is always raw: always pure and untouched by decay or transformation. It stands beyond the culinary triangle that includes raw, cooked, and rotted elements. In fact, honey resists rot, making it a substance that defies time in much the same way as fire defies materiality. Together, honey and tobacco act as rivals to the process of cooking—two substances that *ex-ist* outside the typical culinary transformations, each representing a kind of orthogonal relationship to the raw-cooked binary.

These two substances, honey and tobacco, challenge the limits of Lévi-Strauss's initial oppositional framework. They behave as rival forces, but not in direct opposition—more like two spectral presences that hover over the culinary world without fully entering it. Both, in their respective ways, transcend the categories of raw and cooked, functioning as ghostly outsiders that refuse to conform to the structure of the culinary triangle. In this sense, honey and tobacco offer an orthogonal perspective on Lévi-Strauss's culinary models, acting as parallel yet distinct forces that maintain their own trajectories, rather than collapsing into the familiar dialectic of opposition. They represent a kind of ex-istence—a term that underscores their non-intrusive, rival presence, existing alongside but outside of the core transformations. Inside these rival systems, relationships are defined not by opposition but by orthogonal co-ex-istence.

Thus, ethnotopology does not negate Lévi-Strauss's ideas but rather extends them by emphasizing the orthogonal relationships between cultural elements—relationships

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[4] Lévi-Strauss, Claude: *From Honey to Ashes*: Introduction to a Science of Mythology, vol. 2, London: Jonathan Cape, 1973.

[5] Lévi-Strauss, Claude: *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, vol. 1, London: Jonathan Cape, 1969.

that may coexist and operate in distinct realms without necessarily intersecting or resolving into a binary logic.

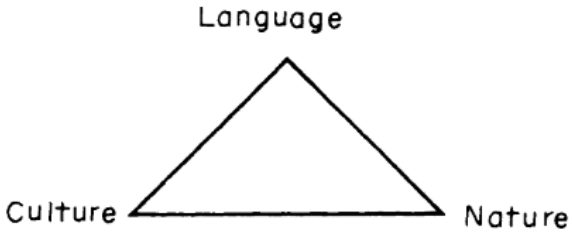
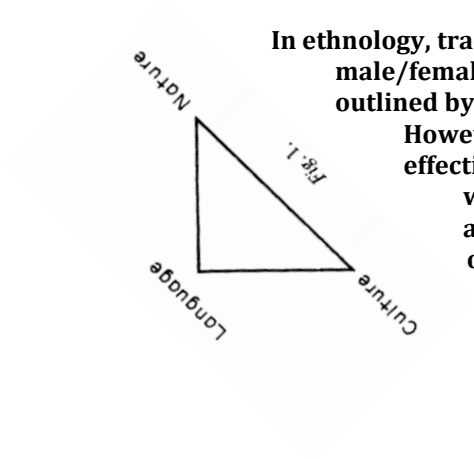


Fig. 1.

"***Structural analysis may be said to be based largely on binary oppositions usually taken in pairs. In a diagram, the binaries would appear as the vertical and horizontal axes. The result of the analysis is usually a triangular scheme of a dichotomy and a mediating middle term. (A remarkably clear demonstration is to be found in Leach.) Inasmuch as Levi-Strauss states that music, like verbal language, is a mediation between nature and culture, it is possible to draw the triangle shown in Fig. 1. The term 'language' may give place to 'music', 'myth' or 'art'."*** **(Brenner, 304)**[6]

By rotating the triangle, the relationship between culture and nature shifts from oppositional to orthogonal. No longer requiring language as a mediator, culture and nature coexist on perpendicular axes. This removes the necessity of resolving tensions between them and redefines their interaction as relational rather than binary. The triangle becomes a model of independent, yet interacting forces that exist in parallel, rather than in opposition.



In ethnology, traditional structures have often been depicted as binary: male/female, nature/culture, good/evil—reflecting the dualistic logic outlined by Claude Lévi-Strauss and structuralist anthropology. However, *ethnotopology* rejects this mode of thinking that is effectively not even used by Lévi-Strauss himself in his extensive work, positing that human interactions, cultural phenomena, and even rivalries are better understood as orthogonal, not opposing, forces.

The rivalry is a strange thing, for instance, Democrats and Republicans are not truly binary opposites—they are orthogonal rivals, inhabiting the same system while remaining structurally distinct. This space of orthogonal rivalry also mirrors many social, historical, and cultural processes, as seen in Rumi's parable of the *mosquito and the wind*.

Mosquito and the Wind

In the story, Solomon, the wise king, is approached by a mosquito complaining about the wind's incessant torment. The mosquito argues that the wind constantly blows it away, causing suffering, and begs Solomon to intervene and judge between them.

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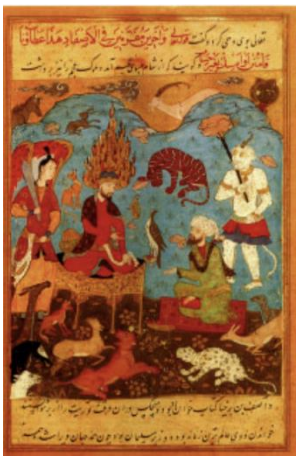
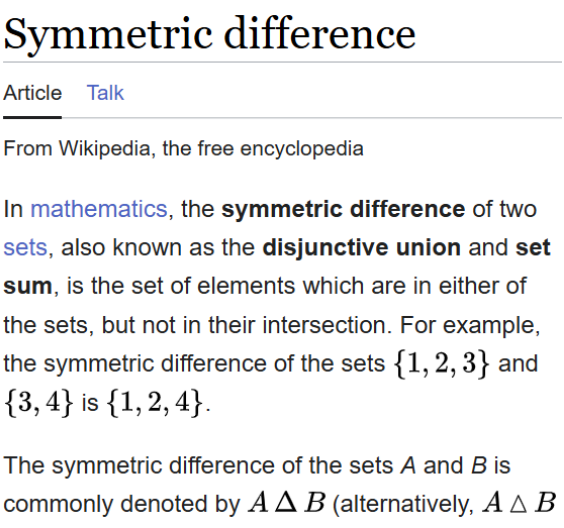
[6] Brenner, A. (1977). The Structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss and the Visual Arts. *Leonardo*, *10*(4), 303–306. https://doi.org/10.2307/1573767



This situation illustrates an orthogonal, non-binary relationship—there is no judgment possible, as each entity exists within its own orthogonal realm. Their multidimensional relationship transcends simplistic binaries. The mosquito's complaint to Solomon about the wind's unrelenting force places both elements into a non-binary dynamic. The wind and the mosquito act as *orthogonal forces*, each existing within its own dimension of power. Solomon, in his wisdom, understands that no judgment can resolve this tension because the two do not actually oppose each other in a binary sense. Rumi concludes that light and darkness, much like the wind and the mosquito, cannot meet or share the same space, as darkness is merely the absence of light.

Jacques Derrida describes meaning as often structured by hierarchical oppositions, where *'one of the two terms governs the other*' (Derrida, Jacques, 1992, *Positions*, p. 41). Ethnotopology, by using concepts from spatial thinking and topology, provides a clearer understanding of how *'one governs the other*,' presenting their interaction as a form of union in rivalry without overlap. In this way, orthogonality can be seen as *'Union Without Intersection*,' offering a fresh perspective grounded in topological ideas.



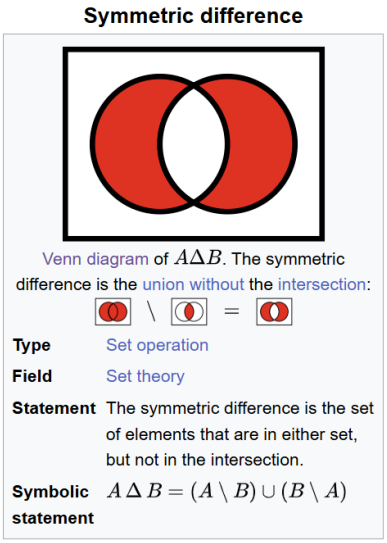
Symmetric difference

Article Talk

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In mathematics, the **symmetric difference** of two sets, also known as the **disjunctive union** and **set sum**, is the set of elements which are in either of the sets, but not in their intersection. For example, the symmetric difference of the sets $\{1, 2, 3\}$ and $\{3, 4\}$ is $\{1, 2, 4\}$.

The symmetric difference of the sets *A* and *B* is commonly denoted by $A \Delta B$ (alternatively, $A \triangle B$



Symmetric difference

Venn diagram of $A \Delta B$. The symmetric difference is the union without the intersection:

Type	Set operation
Field	Set theory
Statement	The symmetric difference is the set of elements that are in either set, but not in the intersection.
Symbolic statement	$A \Delta B = (A \setminus B) \cup (B \setminus A)$

Ethnotopology as a Topologic Space

The concept of *ethnotopology*, in its topological interpretation, suggests that the relationships among cultural elements or social actors should be understood within a multidimensional framework. In topology, the study of geometric properties that are preserved under continuous deformations, there are no strict boundaries or fixed forms; instead, there are flexible spaces where structures bend, stretch, and morph while maintaining their core identity. In *ethnotopology*, this translates into how cultural symbols, traditions, or rival groups interact. The traditional binary structures of cultural anthropology are replaced with a vectoral space in which cultural forces move and evolve in *orthogonal dimensions*. These dimensions are not oppositional, but coexist in complex, interdependent ways akin to the concept explored by British social

anthropologist Rodney Needham in his 1980 essay carrying the same name: *'Dual Sovereignty*.'[7]

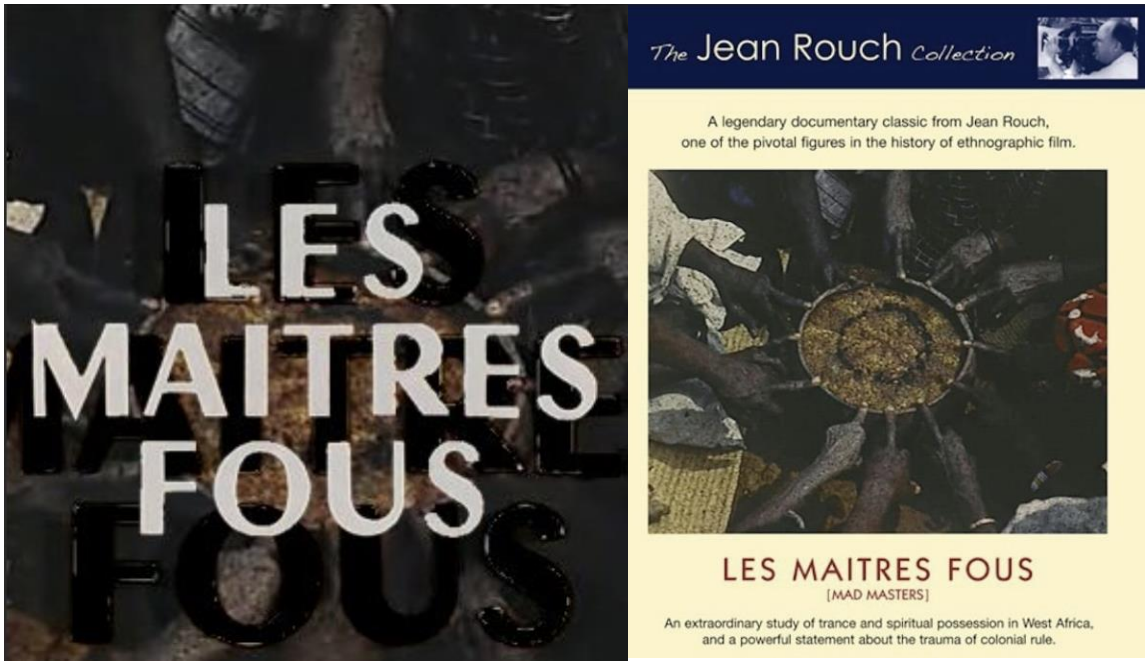
In chess, the interplay between the king and queen (vizier) exemplifies a form of dual sovereignty. Needham defines this as the nuanced relationship between religious and political authority, marked by both complementarity and tension. His framework, building on James George Frazer's analysis of sacred kingship, shows how dual sovereignty manifests across cultures and epochs—such as the medieval Pope versus Emperor or the Buddha versus Chakravartin in ancient India. In chess, the king and queen operate with distinct roles and powers, reflecting 'Union Without Intersection': they influence the board in perpendicular ways without directly overlapping in their movements. This dynamic captures the essence of dual sovereignty, where entities function independently yet interact within their own defined realms.

In ethnotopology, the raw and the cooked exist as *orthogonal dimensions*—they influence each other, but neither fully contains or negates the other: tobacco and honey coexists as culturally significant substances without fitting into a binary opposition. The cultural landscape is not a flat plane where oppositional forces battle for dominance, but a multidimensional space where trajectories cross, overlap, orbit around or run parallel without collapsing into each other. The *fundamental polygon* of this vector space allows for rivalries to emerge, but not in the sense of pure conflict.

They Are Eating Dogs

In Jean Rouch's *Les maîtres fous* (mad masters), one of the most unsettling moments occurs when the participants of the Hauka ritual, deep in trance, slaughter and eat a dog. For the participants in the ritual, however, the act of eating a dog was a radical gesture, a vivid symbol of their transformation into the "*mad masters."* The ritual possession enabled them to step into the skins of their oppressors, to wield their authority and embrace their madness. The consumption of the dog, an unthinkable act, represented a final severance from the rules imposed on them, a descent into the madness that mirrored the cruelty and domination they experienced under colonial rule. They were now as "*mad*" as their masters, capable of any act, even those considered most horrific. Yet, this madness was not mere mimicry; In consuming a dog, they inhabited an orthogonal space where power could be appropriated and transformed—operating in a vertical, not oppositional, dimension. The act of eating the dog in *Les maîtres fous* exemplifies the orthogonal relationship discussed earlier. It does not exist in direct

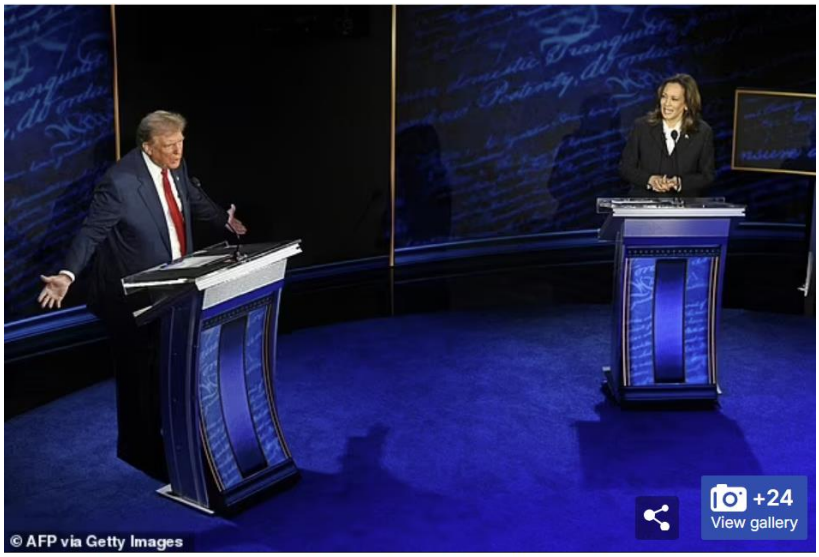
[7] Needham, Rodney. "Dual Sovereignty." In *Against the Tranquility of Axioms: Essays on the History of Anthropology*, edited by George W. Stocking Jr., 198-219. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980.


LES MAITRES FOUS
The Jean Rouch Collection
A legendary documentary classic from Jean Rouch,
one of the pivotal figures in the history of ethnographic film.
LES MAITRES FOUS
[MAD MASTERS]
An extraordinary study of trance and spiritual possession in West Africa,
and a powerful statement about the trauma of colonial rule.

opposition to colonial rule but functions in a space of its own—a space where the roles of oppressor and oppressed are *inverted* yet still mutually defined. The ritual does not confront colonial power head-on but redefines the very terms of engagement. Rather than standing in simple defiance, the participants step into a space that neither challenges nor surrenders to their oppressors in the traditional sense, but instead creates a parallel reality where they, too, can be "*mad masters*." This reflects the earlier idea of orthogonality in *ethnotopology*, where entities interact without subsuming or negating one another. Colonial power and indigenous resistance do not intersect in the ritual but instead run alongside each other.

Just as the moon's trajectory and Earth's gravity remain in delicate balance, so too do the colonial system and the Hauka's mimicry operate in an orthogonal relation. The ritual itself is not a direct confrontation; it creates a new space where colonial power is appropriated in distortion. Certainly. The participants, by eating dogs, demonstrate their ability to transcend not only the boundaries of what is deemed human or acceptable by their oppressors but also the very image of the oppressor itself, as seen through their eyes—like two parallel mirrors reflecting an infinite loop of distorted authority. They do not simply oppose colonial power; rather, they act upon it from a parallel dimension. This is the plane of *representational presentation*—where the mimetic performance of power reveals its underlying absurdity and fragility, exposing the emptiness of colonial authority while inhabiting it. In this space, they subvert the rules of domination, not by confrontation, but by embodying its madness and grotesquely magnifying its logic to its breaking point.

In considering the mental processes and interactions within a vectoral space, rivalry offers a compelling example that challenges traditional binary oppositions. In a competitive situation, such as two political candidates vying for the presidency, it is tempting to frame Democrats and Republicans, or any two contenders, as binary opposites. However, this perspective is limited and fails to capture the true nature of their relationship.



During a debate with Kamala Harris, former President Donald Trump claimed that the 'people that came in' eat cats and dogs in Springfield, Ohio

In reality, the two parties or candidates are not mere opposites but rivals competing for the same position, fulfilling the same task of governance. Their relationship is not one of opposition where one negates the other; rather, they both aim to occupy the same goal space, like vectors that converge toward the same point. The objective—a seat in the White House—is singular, and both parties direct their efforts toward this shared destination.

They Are Eating Oysters: *The Walrus and the Carpenter*

"Would you tell me which road leads out of the wood?" "What shall I repeat to her?" said Tweedledee, looking round at Tweedledum with great solemn eyes, and not noticing Alice's question. "'The Walrus and the Carpenter is the longest," Tweedledum replied, giving his brother an affectionate hug. Tweedledee began instantly: "The sun was shining——" Here Alice ventured to interrupt him. "If it's very long," she said, as politely as she could, "would you please tell me first which road——" Tweedledee smiled gently, and began again: "The sun was shining on the sea, Shining with all his might: He did his very best to make The billows smooth and bright— And

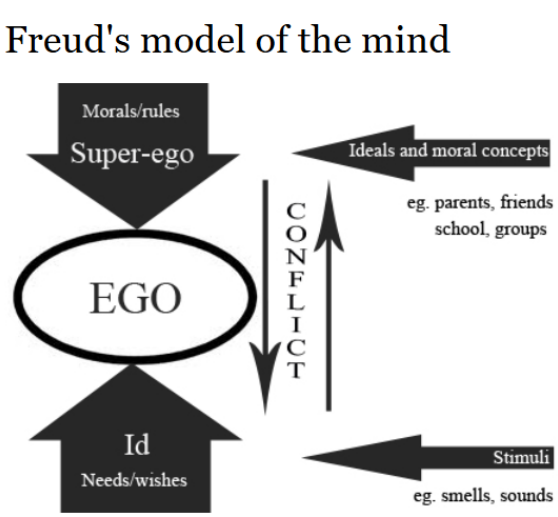
this was odd, because it was The middle of the night. The moon was shining sulkily, Because she thought the sun Had got no business to be there After the day was done— 'It's very rude of him,' she said, 'To come and spoil the fun!' The sea was wet as wet could be, The sands were dry as dry. You could not see a cloud, because No cloud was in the sky: No birds were flying overhead— There were no birds to fly. The Walrus and the Carpenter Were walking close at hand; They wept like anything to see Such quantities of sand: 'If this were only cleared away,' They said, 'it would be grand!' 'If seven maids with seven mops Swept it for half a year, Do you suppose,' the Walrus said, 'That they could get it clear?' 'I doubt it,' said the Carpenter, And shed a bitter tear. 'O Oysters, come and walk with us!' The Walrus did beseech. 'A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk, Along the briny beach: We cannot do with more than four, To give a hand to each. The eldest Oyster looked at him, But never a word he said: The eldest Oyster winked his eye, And shook his heavy head— Meaning to say he did not choose To leave the oyster-bed. But four young Oysters hurried up, All eager for the treat: Their coats were brushed, their faces washed, Their shoes were clean and neat— And this was odd, because, you know, They hadn't any feet. Four other Oysters followed them, And yet another four; And thick and fast they came at last, And more, and more, and more— All hopping through the frothy waves, And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter Walked on a mile or so, And then they rested on a rock Conveniently low: And all the little Oysters stood And waited in a row. 'The time has come,' the Walrus said, 'To talk of many things: Of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax— Of cabbages—and kings— And why the sea is boiling hot— And whether pigs have wings.' 'But wait a bit,' the Oysters cried, 'Before we have our chat; For some of us are out of breath, And all of us are fat!' 'No hurry!' said the Carpenter. They thanked him much for that. 'A loaf of bread,' the Walrus said, 'Is what we chiefly need: Pepper and vinegar besides Are very good indeed— Now if you are ready, Oysters dear, We can begin to feed! 'But not on us!' the Oysters cried, Turning a little blue. 'After such kindness, that would

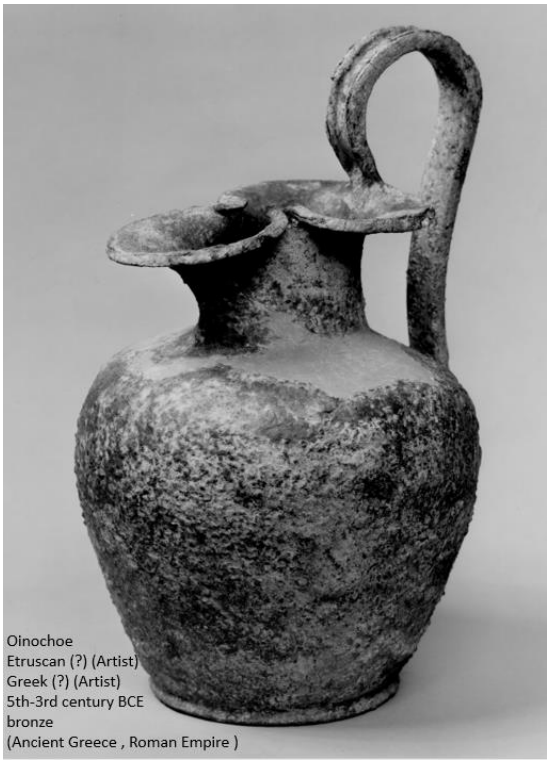
be A dismal thing to do!' 'The night is fine,' the Walrus said. 'Do you admire the view? 'It was so kind of you to come! And you are very nice!' The Carpenter said nothing but 'Cut us another slice: I wish you were not quite so deaf— I've had to ask you twice!' 'It seems a shame,' the Walrus said, 'To play them such a trick, After we've brought them out so far, And made them trot so quick!' The Carpenter said nothing but 'The butter's spread too thick!' 'I weep for you,' the Walrus said. 'I deeply sympathize! With sobs and tears he sorted out Those of the largest size, Holding his pocket-handkerchief Before his streaming eyes. 'O Oysters,' said the Carpenter, 'You've had a pleasant run! Shall we be trotting home again?' But answer came there none— And this was scarcely odd, because They'd eaten every one." "I like the Walrus best," said Alice: "because you see he was a little sorry for the poor oysters." "He ate more than the Carpenter, though," said Tweedledee. "You see he held his handkerchief in front, so that the Carpenter couldn't count how many he took: contrariwise." "That was mean!" Alice said indignantly. "Then I like the Carpenter best——if he didn't eat so many as the Walrus." "But he ate as many as he could get," said Tweedledum. This was a puzzler.

The Walrus and the Carpenter illustrates the paradox of sympathy intertwined with selfishness, and the notion that perceived differences can mask shared intent. While the walrus appears sorrowful, expressing regret for their actions, he still consumes the oysters with gusto. The carpenter, less outwardly emotional, nonetheless shares the same goal: to eat as many oysters as possible. Both figures lead the oysters to their doom through deception, despite their differing methods and behaviors. This story, as told by *Tweedledum* and *Tweedledee*, highlights a fundamental dynamic not unlike political rivalry or competitive situations. The walrus and the carpenter are not oppositional forces in a binary structure, but rather two actors pursuing the same objective through different means. Their apparent differences, like the varying tactics of political candidates, obscure the fact that they ultimately seek the same goal—be it consuming the oysters or winning power. Both act independently, yet they are aligned in their final purpose.

In Lacan's *Kant avec Sade*, we see this intricate intersection where ethical duty, as outlined by Kant, and perverse enjoyment, as demonstrated by Sade, meet in an orthogonal relation: The ethical imperative (Kant's *moral law*) and the jouissance of the Sadean subject who discharges his pain into the body of someone else, both manifest as demands, yet their alignment is orthogonal, not hierarchical or oppositional. This is where the subject is split and also the realm where quality (Q) transforms into quantity (Qη) (cf. Ferud's *Entwurf*), in other words, where moral imperatives become excessive



and indistinguishable from desire, and where external stimuli transmute into internal sensations. The Kantian notion of duty and the Sadean will to enjoyment collide at the intersection of the subject's desire and the symbolic law, each moving independently yet structurally intertwined. Sympathy is intertwined with selfishness, as seen in the *Walrus and the Carpenter*, and altruistic acts are not so far removed from self-serving ends. In Lacanian terms, this orthogonality forms a crucial space of desire where the subject is caught between the *Other's* demand and their own excess, echoing how these forces co-ex-ist. This interplay invites a topological interpretation, where vectors of duty and pleasure (Kant and Sade) intersect, shaping the fabric of subjectivity itself.


Oinochoe
Etruscan (?) (Artist)
Greek (?) (Artist)
5th-3rd century BCE
bronze
(Ancient Greece , Roman Empire)

Duality in Unity: Two Openings, One Vessel
This *Oinochoe*, a bronze vessel from the 5th-3rd century BCE (Etruscan or Greek), presents two openings that flow into the same container. Symbolic of orthogonality, the dual rims represent parallel, non-intersecting paths that serve a singular purpose. Just as political rivals or seemingly opposed forces might vie for the same space without truly intersecting, this vase elegantly captures the concept of "union without intersection." A perfect metaphor for complementary forces that do not directly oppose each other but still belong to the same framework.